A brief Character of the Protector Oliver Cromwel;

with an Account of the Slavery he left the Nation under, at his Death: Comprehended in a Seasonable Speech, made by a worthy Member of Parliament, in the House of Commons; Concerning the other HOUSE. March 1659.

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Licensed, Novem. 15th. 1692. EDM. BOHUN.

Mr. Speaker,

THis days Debate is but too clear a Proof, that we Englishmen are right Islanders, Variable and Mutable like the Air we live in. For, Sir, if that were not our Temper, we should not be now Disputing, Whether after all those Hazards we have run, That Blood we have spilt, That Treasure we have exhausted, we should not now sit down; just where we did begin; and of our own accords, submit our selves to that Slavery, which we have not only ventured our Estates and Lives, but I wish I could not say, our Souls and Consciences, to throw off. What others, Sir, think of this Levity, I cannot tell; I mean, those that steer their Consciences by Occasions, and cannot lose that Honour they never had: But truly, Sir, for my own part, I dare as yet not declare it, to be my Opinion, as others more prudential, dare avow it to be theirs. That we are this day making good all the Reproaches of our Enemies, owning of our selves Oppressors, Murderers, Regicides, Subverters of that, which now we do not only acknowledge to have been a Lawful Government; but by recalling it, confess it now to be the best. Which, Sir, if it be true, and that now we begin to see aright, I heartily wish, our Eyes had been somewhat open; and for three Nations sake, that we had purchas'd our Conviction at a cheaper Rate. We might, Sir, in Forty Two, have been, what we thus contend to be in Fifty Nine; and our Consciences have had much less to Answer for to God, and our Reputations to the World.

But, Mr. *Speaker*, I wish with all my Soul, I did state our Case to you amiss, and that it were the Question only, *Whether we would voluntarily relapse into the Disease we were formerly possessed with, and of our own accords, take up our old Yoke, that we with Wearing and Custom, had made Habitual and Easy, and which (it may be) 'twas more our Wantonness than our Pressure, that made us throw it off.* But this, Sir, is not now the Question: That which we deliberate, is not, whether we will say, We do not care to be free, we like our old Masters, and will now be content to have our Ears bored at the Door-post of their House, and so serve them for ever; But, Sir, as if we were contending for Shame as well as Servitude, we are carrying our *Ears to be bored* at the Doors of *another House*: A House, Sir, without Name, and therefore it is but congruous it should consist of Members without Family: A House that inverts the Order of Slavery, and subjects it to our Servants; and yet, in contradiction to Scripture, we do not only not think that Subjection intolerable, but are now pleading for it. In a word, Sir, it is a House of so incongruous and odious a Composition and Mixture, that certainly the grand Architect, would never have so framed it, had it not been his Design, as well to shew to the World *the Contempt he had of us*, as to demonstrate *the Power he had over us*.

Sir, *That it may appear, that I intend not to be ſo imprudent (as far as my part is concerned) as to make a voluntary Reſignation of my Liberty and Honour, to this excellent part of his late Highneſs his laſt Will and Teſtament, I ſhall crave, Sir, the leave, to declare in a few Particulars, my Opinion of this Other Houſe; wherein I cannot but promiſe my ſelf to be favourably heard by ſome, but patiently heard by all: For thoſe Engliſhmen that are againſt this Houſe, will certainly with content hear the Reaſons, why others are ſo too: Thoſe Courtiers that are for it, give me Evidence enough to think, that in Nature there is nothing which they cannot willingly endure.*

Firſt, Sir, As to the Author and Framer of this Houſe of Peers; Let me put you in mind, it was he, that with reiterated Oaths, had often *ſworn to be True and Faithful to the Government without it*; and not only ſworn ſo himſelf, but had been the chief Inſtrument both to draw and compel others to Swear ſo too. So, Sir, that the foundation of this Noble Fabrick was laid in Perjury, and was begun with the Violation and Contempt, as well of the Laws of God, as of the Nation. He, Sir, that call'd Monarchy *Antichriſtian* in another, and indeed made it ſo in himſelf: He that Voted a Houſe of Lords *dangerous and unneceſſary*, and too truly made it ſo in his Partiſans: He that with fraud and force deprived you of your Liberty, when he was living, and entailed Slavery upon you at his Death: 'Tis he, Sir, that hath left you theſe worthy Overſeers of that his laſt Will and Teſtament; who, however they have behaved themſelves in other Truſts, we may be confident, they will endeavour faithfully to diſcharge themſelves in this. In a word, Sir, had this Other Houſe no other Fault, but its Inſtitution and Author, I ſhould think that Original Sin enough for its Condemnation: For I am of their Opinion that think, that for the good of Example, all Acts and Monuments of Tyrants are to be Expunged and Eraſed, that, if poſſible, their Memory might be no longer liv'd than their Carkaſſes. And the truth is, their good Laws are of the number of their Snares, and but baſe Brokage for our Liberty.

But, Sir, to impute to this other Houſe, no other Faults but its own, you may pleaſe in the firſt place to conſider of the Power which his Highneſs hath left it, according to that *humble Petition and Advice*, which he was pleaſed to give Order to the Parliament to preſent unto him. For, Sir, as the Romans had Kings, ſo had his Highneſs Parliaments, amongſt his Inſtruments of Slavery; and I hope, Sir, it will be no Offence for me to pray, that his Son may not have them ſo too. But, Sir, they have a *Negative Voice*, and all other Circumſtances of that Arbitrary Power, which made the former Houſe intolerable; only the Dignity and Quality of the Perſons themſelves is wanting, that our Slavery may be accompanied with Ignominy and Affront. And now, Mr. *Speaker*, have we not glorioufly vindicated the Nations Liberty? Have we not worthily imployed our Blood and Treaſure, to aboliſh that Power that was ſet over us by the Law, to have the ſame impos'd upon us without a Law? And after all that Sound and Noiſe we have made in the World, of the Peoples Legiſlative Power, and of the Supremacy and Omnipotency of their Repreſentatives; we now ſee there is no more Power left them, but what is put in the Balance, and equalled by the Power of a few Retainers of Tyranny, who are ſo far from being of the Peoples choice, that the moſt part of them are only known to the Nation by the Villainies and Miſchiefs they have committed in it.

In the next place, Sir, you may please to consider, that the Persons invested with this Power, are all of them nominated and designed by the Lord Protector; (for to say, *by him and his Council*, hath in effect no more distinction, than if one should say, *by Oliver, and Cromwel.*) By this means the Protector himself, by his own and his Peers Negative, becomes, in effect, two of the three Estates; and by consequence, is possess'd of two parts of the Legislative Power. I think this can be a doubt to no Man, that will but take the pains to read over that fair Catalogue of those Noble Lords; for certainly no Man that reads their Names, can possibly fansie for what other Vertues or good Qualities such a composition should be made choice of, but only the certainty of their compliance with whatsoever should be enjoyned them by their *Creator*. (Pardon, Sir, that Name, for 'tis properly applyable, where things are *made of Nothing.*) Now, Sir, if in the former Government, encrease of Nobility was a grievance, because the New Nobility, having fresh obligation to the Crown, were the easilier led to compliance with it: And if one of the main Reasons for Exclusion of the Bishops out of the House of Lords, was because that they being of the King's making, were, in effect, so many certain Votes for whatever the King had a mind to carry in that House: How much more assured will that inconvenience now be, when the Protector, that wants nothing of the King, in every sense but the Title, shall not only make and nominate a part, but of himself constitute the whole House? In a word, Sir, if our Liberty was endangered by the former House, we may give it lost in the other House: And 'tis in all respects, as advantageous and secure for the Liberty of the Nation, which we come hither to redeem, to allow this Power and Notion to his Highness Officers, or Council; nay his very Chaplains, as, to his other Creatures and Partisans in his other House.

Now having considered, Sir, their Author, Power and Constitution, give me leave to make some few Observations, though but in general, of the Persons themselves that are design'd to be our Lords and Masters; and let us see what either the extraordinary Quality or Qualifications are of these egregious Legislators, which may justifie their Choice, and prevail with the People to admit them, at least, into equal Authority with the whole Representative Body of themselves. But what I shall speak, Sir, of their Quality, or any thing else concerning them, I would be thought to speak with distinction, and to intend only of the Major part. For I acknowledge, Mr. Speaker, *the mixture of this other House to be like the Compositions of Apothecaries, who are us'd to mix something of Relish, something grateful to the Taste, to qualifie their bitter Drugs, which else, perchance, would be immediately spit out and never swallowed.*

So, Sir, his Highness, of deplorable Memory to this Nation, to countenance as well the want of Quality as Honesty in the rest, hath nominated some, against whom there lies no other Reproach, but only that Nomination; but not, Sir, out of any Respect to their Qualities, or regard to their Vertues, but with regard to the no Quality, to the no Vertues of the rest: which truly, Mr. *Speaker*, if he had not done, we could easily have given a more expres Name to his other House, than he hath been pleased to do: For we know a House design'd only for Beggars and Malefactors, is a *House of Correction*, and term'd so by your Law. But, Mr. *Speaker*, setting those few Persons aside, who, I hope,

think the Nomination a disgrace, and the ever coming to Sit there, much a greater: Can we without Indignation think on the rest? He that's first in their Roll, a condemn'd Coward; one, that out of fear and baseness, did what he could to betray your Liberties, and does now the same for Gain. The second, a Person of as little Sense as Honesty, preferr'd for no other reason, but his no Worth, his no Conscience; except that his cheating his Father of all he had, was thought a Vertue, by him, who by sad Experience, we find hath done as much for his Mother, his Country. The third, a Cavalier, a Presbyterian, an Independent; for a Republique, for a Protector, for every thing, for nothing, but only that one thing, *Money*. 'Twere endless to run through them all, to tell you, Sir, of their Lordships of Seventeen-pound Land a year of Inheritance, of their Farmer Lordships, Dray-men Lordships, Cobler-Lordships, without one Foot of Land, but what the Blood of English-men hath been the price of: These, Sir, are to be our Rulers, these the Judges of our Lives and Fortunes; to these we are to stand bare, whilst their Pageant-state-Lordships deign to give us a conference upon their Breeches. Mr. *Speaker*, we have already had too much experience, how unsupportable Servants are, when they become our Masters. All kind of Slavery is miserable in the accompt of all generous Minds; but that which comes accompanied with Scorn and Contempt, stirs every Mans Indignation, and is indured by none, whose Nature does not intend for Slaves, as well as Fortune.

I say not this, Mr. *Speaker*, to revile any Man with his Meanness; for I never thought either the Malignity or Indulgence of Fortune, to be (with wise or just men) the Grounds either of their ill or their good Opinion. Mr. *Speaker*, I blame not in these Men the Faults of their Fortune, any otherwise, but as they make them their own: I object to you their Poverty; because it is accompanied with Ambition; I mind you of their Quality, because they themselves forget it. So that 'tis not the Men I am angry with, but with their Lordships; not with Mr. *Barkstead*, or Mr. *Gaoler* (Titles I could well allow them) but with *The Right Honourable, our singular good Lord and Gaoler*: 'Tis this incongruity, Mr. *Speaker*, I am displeased with.

So, Sir, that though we easily grant Poverty and Necessity to be no Faults, yet we must allow them to be great Impediments in the way of Honour, and such as nothing but extraordinary Vertue and Merit can well remove. The Scripture reckons it among *Jeroboam*'s great Faults, that *he made Priests of the meanest of the People*; and sure it was none of the Vertues of our *Jeroboam* (who hath set up his Calves too, and would have our Tribes come up and Worship them) that he observed the same Method, in making of Lords.

One of the few Requests the *Portugals* made to *Philip* the Second of *Spain*, when he got that Kingdom (as his late Highness did this) by an Army, was, *That he would not make Nobility contemptible, by advancing such to that Degree, whose Quality or Vertue could be no way thought to deserve it*. Nor have we formerly been less apprehensive of such Inconveniencies our selves; it was in *Ric.* I's time, one of the Bishop of *Ely*'s Accusations, that Castles and Forts of Trust, he did *Obscuris & ignotis hominibus tradere*, put in the hands of obscure and unknown Men: But We, Mr. *Speaker*, to such a kind of Men, are delivering up the Power of our Laws, and in that the power of All.

In

In the 17 *Edw.* 4. there paſt an Act of Parliament, for the Degrading of *John Nevil* Marqueſs *Mountague* and Duke of *Bedford*; the Reaſon expreſt in the Act, *Becauſe he had not a Revenue ſufficient for the maintaining of that Dignity*, to which he added, *That when Men of mean Birth are called to high Eſtate, and have no Livelihood to ſupport it, it induceth Briberies, Extortions, and all kind of Injuſtices that are followed by Gain.* And in the Parliament of 2 *Carol.* the Peers in a Petition againſt Scottiſh and Iriſh Titles, told the King, *That 'tis a Novelty without Precedent, That Men ſhould poſſeſs Honours, where they poſſeſs nothing elſe; and that they ſhould have a Vote in Parliament, where they have not a Foot of Land.* But if it had been added, *Sir, Or have no Land, but what is the purchaſe of their Villainies*, againſt how many of our new Peers had this been an important Objection? To conclude, Sir, it hath been a very juſt and reaſonable care, amongſt all Nations, not to render that deſpis'd and contemptible to the People, which is deſign'd for their Reverence, and their Awe: Which, Sir, bare and empty Title, without Quality and Vertue, never procured any Man, any more than the Image in the Fable made the Aſs adored that carried it.

After their Quality, give me leave, Sir, to ſpeak a word or two of their Qualifications; which certainly ought in reaſon to carry ſome proportion with the Employments they deſign themſelves. The Houſe of Lords, Sir, are our King's Hereditary great Council: They are the Higheſt Court of Judicature; they have their part in Judging and Determining of the Reaſons of making new Laws, and of Abrogating old: From amongſt them we take our great Officers of State; they are commonly our Generals at Land, and our Admirals at Sea: In concluſion, Sir, they are both of the Eſſence and Conſtitution of our old Government; and have beſides the greateſt and nobleſt Share in the Adminiſtration. Now certainly, Sir, to judge according to the Dictates of Reaſon, one would imagine ſome ſmall Faculties and Endowments to be neceſſary for the diſcharging of ſuch a Calling; and thoſe, ſuch as are not uſually acquired in Shops and Ware-houſes, nor found by following the Plow: Now what other Academies moſt of their Lordſhips have been bred in, but their Shops; what other Arts they have been verſed in, but thoſe which more require good Arms and good Shoulders than good Heads, I think, Mr. *Speaker*, we are yet to be informed. Sir, we commit not the Education of our Children to Ignorant and Illiterate Maſters; nay, we truſt not our very Horſes to unskilful Grooms: I beſeech you, Sir, let Us think it belongs to Us, to have ſome Care into whoſe Hands we commit the management of the Common-wealth: And if we cannot have perſons of Birth and Fortune to be our Rulers, to whoſe Quality we would willingly ſubmit; I beſeech you, Sir, for our Credits and Safeties ſake, let us ſeek Men, at leaſt, of Parts and Education, to whoſe Abilities we may have ſome Reaſon to give way. If, Sir, a Patient dies under a Phyſician's hand, the Law eſteems that not a Felony, but a misfortune in the Phyſician; but if one that is no Phyſician, undertakes the management of a Cure, and the Party miſcarries; the Law makes the Emperick a Felon, and ſure, in all Mens Opinion, the Patient a Fool. To conclude, Sir, for Great Men to Govern 'tis ordinary; for Able Men 'tis natural; Knaves many times come to it by Force and Neceſſity, and Fools ſometimes by chance:

But

but universal Choice and Election of Fools and Knaves for Government, was never yet made by any, who were not themselves like those they chose.

But methinks, Mr. Speaker, *I see ready to rise after me, some Gentlemen that shall tell you the great Services their new Lordships have done the Common-wealth; that shall extol their Valour, their Godliness, their Fidelity to the Cause; The Scripture too (no doubt) as 'tis to all purposes, shall be brought in to Argue for them; and we shall hear of the* Wisdom of the poor Man that saved the City; *of the* not many Wise, not many Mighty; *Attributes I can no way deny to be due to their Lordships. Mr.* Speaker, *I shall be as forward as any Man to declare their Services, and acknowledge them; though I might tell you, that the same Honour is not purchas'd by the Blood of an Enemy, but of a fellow Citizen; that for Victories in Civil Wars, till our Armies march through the City, I have not read that the Conquerours have been so void of Shame, as to Triumph.* Cæsar *not much more indulgent to his Country than our late Protector, did not so much as write publique Letters of his Victory at* Pharsalia, *much less had Days of Thanksgiving to his Gods, and Anniversary Feasts, for having been a prosperous Rebel, and given Justice and his Country the worst.*

But, Sir, I leave this Argument, and to be as good as my word, come to put you in mind of some of their Services, and the Obligation you owe them for the same. To speak nothing, Sir, of one of my Lords Commissioners Valour at *Bristol*, nor of another Noble Lords brave Adventure at the Bear-garden. I must tell you, Sir, that most of them have had the Courage to do things, which (I may boldly say) few other Christians durst have so adventured their Souls to have attempted: They have not only subdued their Enemies, but their Masters, that raised and maintained them; they have not only Conquered *Scotland* and *Ireland*, but Rebellious *England* too; and there suppress a Malignant Party of Magistrates and Laws. And that nothing should be wanting to make them indeed compleat Conquerors, (without the help of Philosophy) they have even Conquered themselves. All Shame they have subdued, as perfectly as all Justice; the Oaths they have taken, they have as easily digested, as their old General could himself; publique Covenants and Engagements, they have trampled under-foot: In conclusion, so entire a Victory they have over themselves, that their Consciences are as much their Servants, as, Mr. *Speaker*, we are. But, Sir, give me leave to conclude with that which is more admirable than all this, and shews the confidence they have of themselves and us: After having many times trampled on the Authority of the House of Commons, and no less than five times dissolv'd them, they hope for those good Services to the House of Commons, by the House of Commons, to be made a House of Lords. I have been overlong, Sir, for which I crave your pardon, therefore in a word I conclude. I beseech you, let us think it our Duty to have a care of two things: First, That Villainies be not encouraged with the Rewards of Vertue: Secondly, That the Authority and Majesty of the Government of this Nation be not defiled, and exposed to Contempt, by committing so considerable a part of it, to Persons of as mean Quality as Parts.

The *Thebans* did not admit Merchants into Government, till they had left thei Traffick ten years: Sure, 'twould have been long before Coblers and Dray-me would have been allowed. If, Sir, the Wisdom of this House, shall find it nece sary to begin where we left, and shall think we have been hitherto like the Prodi gal, and that now when our necessities perswade us (*i. e.*) that we are almo brought to herd it with Swine, now 'tis high time to think of a return; let u without more ado, without this motly mixture, even take our *Rulers as at the first* so that we can be but reasonably secured to avoid our *Counsellours as at th beginning*.

Give me leave, Sir, to release your Patience with a short Story. *Livy* tell us, There was a State in *Italy*, an Aristocracy, where the Nobility stretcht thei Prerogative too high, and presumed a little too much upon the Peoples Liberty and Patience; whereupon the Discontents were so general, and so great, tha they apparently tended to a Dissolution of Government, and the turning of al things into Anarchy and Confusion. At the same time, besides these Distemper at home, there was a Potent Enemy ready to fall upon them from abroad, tha had been an over-match for them at their best Union, but now in these Disor ders, was like to find them very Ready, and very easy Prey: A wise Man, Sir in the City, that did not at all approve of the Insolency of the Nobility, and a little liked Popular Tumults, bethought himself of this Stratagem, to cozen his Country into safety. Upon a pretence of Counsel, he procured the Nobility to meet all together; which when they had done, he found a Way to lock all the Doors upon them; goes away himself, and takes the Keys with him: Then he immediately Summons the People; tells them, that by a Contrivance of his, he had taken all the Nobility in a Trap; That now was the time for them to be revenged upon them for all their Insolencies; that therefore they should imme diately go along with him, and dispatch them. Sir, the Officers of our Army after a Fast, could not be more ready for the Villainy, than this People were: and accordingly they made as much hast to the Slaughter, as their Lord Prote ctor could desire them. But, Sir, this wise Man I told you of, was their Lord Protector indeed: As soon as he had brought the People where the Parliament was Sitting, and when they but expected the Word to fall to the Butchery, and take their Heads: *Gentlemen*, says he, *Though I would not care how soon this Work of Reformation were over; yet in the Ship of the Common-wealth, we must not throw the Steers-men over Board, till we have provided others for the Helm: Let us consider before we take these Men away, in what other hands we may more securely trust our Li berty, and the management of the Common-wealth.* And so he advis'd them before the putting down of the former, to bethink themselves of constituting an other House.

He begins and nominates one, a Man highly cried up in the Popular Faction a confiding Man, one of much Zeal, little Sense, and no Quality; you may sup pose him, Sir, a zealous Cobler: The People in conclusion murmured at this, and were loath their fellow Mutineer, for no other Vertue but Mutining, should come to be advanced to be their Master; and by their Looks and Murmur, sufficiently expresst the Distaste they took at such a Motion. Then he nominates another,

as mean a Mechanick as the former; you may imagine him, Sir, a buſtling rude Dray-man, or the like: He was no ſooner named, but ſome burſt out a laughing, others grew Angry and railed at him, and all Deteſted and ſcorn'd him. Upon this, a Third was named for a Lordſhip, one of the ſame Batch, and every way fit to ſit with the other two. The People then fell into a confuſed laughter and noiſe, and enquired if ſuch were Lords, who (by all the Gods) would be content to be the Commons?

Sir, let me be bold (by the good leave of the other Houſe and yours) to ask the ſame Queſtion? But, Sir, to conclude this Story, and with it I hope the other Houſe: When this wiſe Man I told you of, perceived they were now ſenſible of the inconvenience and miſchief they were running into, and ſaw that the pulling down their Rulers, would prove in the end, but the ſetting up of their Servants; he thought them then prepared to hear Reaſon, and told them: *You ſee*, ſaith he, *That as bad as this is, we cannot, for any thing I ſee, agree upon a better: What then, if after this Fright, we have put our Nobility in, and the demonſtration we have given them of our Power, we try them once more, whether they will mend, and for the future, behave themſelves with more moderation?* That People, Mr. *Speaker*, were ſo wiſe, as to comply with that wiſe Propoſition, and to think it eaſier to mend their old Rulers, than to make New. And I wiſh, Mr. *Speaker*, we may be ſo wiſe to think ſo too.

POST-SCRIPT.

Taking Notice, That many in our TIMES, (I hope Honeſt and Well-meaning Men) have a great Reverence for the Memory of *Oliver Cromwel*, Protector; as being a Man of Piety, and a great Champion for the Liberties of this Nation, I thought the reviving the foregoing Excellent Speech (lately by Accident coming to my Hands) might conduce much to the rectifying of their great Error and Miſtake herein, by the Reprinting it; and therefore have left it to the Diſpoſe of the Printer.

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